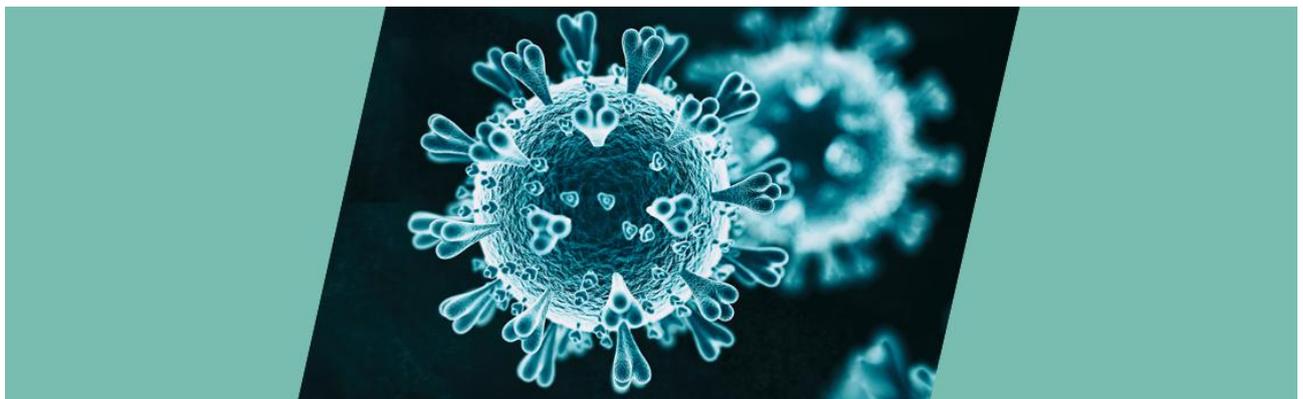


# COVID-19 update as it affects our practice....

The Royal NZ College of General Practitioners has requested that all General Practices step up to help stamp out COVID-19 before the most vulnerable 10% of our population becomes infected (and face a high mortality rate) as well as overwhelming our secondary health system.

This is based on the fact that crowded GPs' surgeries in Italy contributed significantly to the community transfer of COVID-19 and their subsequent high death rate, including many medical/nursing staff.

**Therefore from Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020 all non-urgent and/or routine problems will be managed remotely where possible to reduce the transmission risk of COVID-19.**



This means that we are asking everyone avoid attending the surgery except for urgent problems that are booked and vaccinations (see below).

- **Routine and non-urgent problems** will, where possible, be managed by phone, text and email. Please ring (06) 2785189 and our receptionist can advise how this works. You may need to be “referred” for Practice Nurse advice (usually by a return call) or for a remote “virtual consultation” (txt, email or phone) with the GP which will be charged as usual. The nurse or GP may advise a booked physical consultation if necessary.
- **Repeat prescriptions, ACC18, “Off work” and WINZ forms** are likely to be all remote, as are “return to work” certificates, unless clinically unsafe. Your prescription / certificate can often be sent electronically to avoid attending.
- **Routine smears, General Medicals and even Drivers’ Tests** are all deferred for the time being. NZTA may allow extensions of licences (watch this space).

- **Routine and Influenza Vaccinations** will continue, but ‘Flu shots are currently limited to healthcare workers and patients with “co-morbidities” such as diabetes, heart and lung disease, immunosuppression etc. All patients attending for vaccinations should ring first and will be asked to wait in the hallway and not the usual waiting room. Try to avoid bringing young children (surgery toys off limits).
- If you have **a cough and/or fever and/or sore throat** we are asking you to self-isolate (distance oneself at least 2 metres from others) and NOT attend the surgery. We do not have sufficient equipment to **test for COVID-19** as we have limited swabs and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and a negative test does NOT remove the requirement to distance oneself, **and** this is recommended even if you just have a ‘flu or bad cold. Steroids and antibiotics are not helpful and could worsen outcomes.
- The **two respiratory exceptions** would be **acute asthma** (ring and discuss management) or if you have evidence of **pneumonia** (difficulty breathing, grunting, respiratory effort etc), in which case admission to hospital is probably indicated, but do NOT just turn up to ED, ring ahead or discuss with us.
- Normal emergency (GP or ED) services will be unchanged unless we do not prevent viral transmission, then acute medical services will fail.

